

Holographic by netflixandnaps

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Holly Wheeler, Jim Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Karen Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Mr. Clarke, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Ted Wheeler, Troy Harrington, Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper & Mike Wheeler, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Eleven | Jane Hopper/Will Byers, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield & Lucas Sinclair, Steve Harrington/Dustin Henderson, Will Byers & Dustin Henderson & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers & Eleven | Jane & Dustin Henderson & Maxine Mayfield & Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers & Mike Wheeler, Will Byers/Mike Wheeler

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Summary:

Mike knew he had screwed up. He shouldn't have been at that party and now he was sitting in the back of a police car, metal handcuffs digging into his skin. He should've been at home like he had told his mom he would, babysitting Holly. Mike considered this his first mistake. No. Becoming friends with Troy freshman year was his first mistake.

1. Playlist

1. **Glorious** - Macklemore ft. Skylar Grey
2. **We Are Young** - Fun. ft. Janelle Monáe
3. **Learning to Fly** - Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers
4. **Oceans (Where Feet May Fail)** - Hillsong United
5. **Pitchfork Kids** - AJR
6. **Boulevard of Broken Dreams** - Green Day
7. **Radioactive** - Imagine Dragons
8. **Heavy** - Linkin Park ft. Kiiara
9. **Sober Up** - AJR ft. Rivers Cuomo
10. **Don't Threaten Me with a Good Time** - Panic at the Disco
11. **Ode to Sleep** - Twenty-One Pilots
12. **Strange Love** - Halsey
13. **Weak** - AJR

Click [here](#) for the playlist on Spotify

2. Chapter 1

“I can’t believe this Mike...”

Mike Wheeler sat in the car with his mother, Karen, on the long drive to the house of Joyce Byers, who supposedly could reform children with “complications in their growth”. In otherwise, it was a house to cure people who were addicted to drugs. And that’s why he was going. Kind of. He was going because of Troy. Because Harrington didn’t even take any of the blame.

“Yeah, well it’s not like I want to go there either Mom.”

“But you need to go Mike. You need to go because of the...”

“Because of the drugs. Yeah, I got that.”

Turning up the music in his headphones, Mike sighed, pressing his head against the cool car window. Visions of that night, the one that changed his life for the worst, kept playing inside of his heads. Disco ball. DJ. Solo cups. Fizzing. Mike felt himself go lightheaded. The doctors say it’s part of the sobering up process, but Mike thinks it’s his minds way of telling him that he’s an idiot. It still mad Mike mad that Harrington didn’t own up for what he did, leaving Mike the only one in trouble. Troy wasn’t sober for all of sophomore year! So how come Mike was the only one going to druggie camp?

He could feel his mom start to slow the car down, meaning that they were there. Hawkins, Indiana. Established in 1983. Phenomenal. An old person town. Chicago was upbeat and fun, but Hawkins seemed emotionless. They drove down the barely paved street and Mike was sure the town hadn’t changed since 1983. Benny’s Burgers looked like a shack compared to the burger joints in the Windy City. The middle school and high school were one building. Compared to Chicago’s fancy school buildings, this school looked like a shack. It wasn’t horrible, it just wasn’t super phenomenal. Melvald’s General Store. Whoever owned that must have not had the opportunity to change their name. As they edged towards the edge of town, Mike saw the Hawkins Police Department. It looked like the only upscale building. Mike could feel his summer starting to fall away. When he first got in the car, it drifted away every mile or so, but every inch further they drove was another piece gone. Was this really going to help? A town full of people with old buildings and a bunch of people who smoke? He just wanted to go back to Chicago. His mom didn’t have to worry; he wouldn’t be hanging out with Troy anymore. Not after what he

did.

They drove into the woods on a dirt path that approached a one story log cabin in the middle of a clearing. There was a tall tree shading it, and attached to that tree, on the thick branches, was a tree house. When Mike got out of the car, he saw that it said "Castle Branches: All Friends Welcome". Mike scoffed. He wouldn't be going in there anytime soon because he wasn't a friend and he wasn't even going to be staying that long.

Smoke was coming out of the thick chimney, turning the woods fresh scent of fir tree into one of an old man wheezing out the tobacco smoke from his cigar. Or maybe like a drunk teenager that had been inhaling so many cigarettes that we had to jump in a pool because he thought it would cool down his lungs. Either one worked for Mike. He had seen both.

"Mom, let's just go. We'll get me help in Chicago," Mike complained, already getting in the car. It was too late to turn around. His mom had already knocked on the door. She turned around and signaled him to come over. He groaned, but she only insisted further, so much as glaring at him and mouthing "Get your ass over here now Michael."

Slowly, he trudged from the car, shoving his hands in his pockets. If he was going to do this, he was going to try to stay as isolated as he could. He didn't want any more druggies thinking of him as a friend. But Mike couldn't tell his mom that. She thought he was another stoner, just like his friends. Karen Wheeler didn't know the half of it. A few locks clicked open, and the door timidly opened. A fragile woman who was both pale and shaking opened the door, a bright smile on her face.

"You must be the Wheelers!" Hair fell at out of already destroyed ponytail. She opened the door wider, and Mike saw that she was wearing a robe and bunny slippers. "Please come in, and take off your shoes. We want everyone to be comfortable here!"

"Yeah, we can see..." Mike mumbled, hoping no one would hear, but Karen heard and elbowed him in his side. "Ow!"

"Be nice Mike," his mom replied through clenched teeth, a smile plastered on her face. "You must be Joyce Byers," she said, clearing her throat. "I'm Karen, and this is my son, Michael."

"It's Mike," he muttered, giving her a shy smile as he extended out her hand. She took it.

"Well it's certainly nice to meet you. You're a very polite boy. I like

you already.” He gave her another small smile as she led them to the living room. A dusty plaid sofa was facing the TV, and two armchairs were facing the sofa. Joyce Byers took the couch, ushering both Wheelers into separate armchairs.

“Welcome to the Hopper-Byers household. I know we talked a bit over the phone, Karen, but I’d like to hear from Mike what’s wrong.”

He shrugged. “My mom thinks I’m a druggie.”

“Now why might that be?”

“Because the police showed up at Troy’s party and caught me with a bottle of pills. I had a fistful of them in my hand, so I was arrested. But that’s not what really happened.”

“What actually happened Mike?”

“I don’t know....”

“You don’t know, or you’re not willing to share.”

“Both?”

“Okay. I respect that.”

“I’m sorry,” Karen interrupted, “but how is Michael holding back the truth helping him? I mean, you heard him. He was arrested!”

“Mrs. Wheeler,” Joyce said, keeping very calm, “it’s okay that Mike isn’t ready to share everything yet. My son, Will, held back from me for months. So did my son Jonathan, who struggled with drug addiction. It’s hard to talk about.”

“I see,” the other mother said, but Mike could tell that his mom wasn’t very convinced. “So what’s your program like?”

“Every morning, the kids are up by nine and eat breakfast at nine-thirty. After that, we all go outside for a run at ten. Around ten forty, everyone comes back in to get homework done. Twelve is lunch, which we sometimes go to town for. It’s always at Benny’s. Old Benny is a great friend of Hopper, my husband. At twelve-thirty, we come back and have what Dustin calls ‘Chillax Time.’ Everyone goes to the bedroom and does their own things. Will draws, Lucas uses his guitar, Max puts in her Walkman, Dustin takes a nap or looks at an animal encyclopedia book, and Eleven writes.”

“Wait, Walkman? Eleven?” Mike interrupted, a sudden worry washing over him. Was there no WiFi?

“Yes. Eleven is one of our patients. She’s nicknamed that because she was moved eleven times when she was abducted. And we don’t use electronics here, so there’s only old people options here. A black-and-white television and Walkmans. Speaking of, do you have a phone on you.”

He nodded grimly, handing it over to her. He figured that if he lied, his mother may have beaten him.

"Thank you," she smiled. "Now where was I? Oh yes. Around two, we all spend some time talking about what we're feeling and we'll do something that'll strengthen our bond as a team. After half an hour of that, we have some free time, so sometimes the kids go to town, or hang out here. Around four, everyone comes back and we do some yoga to relax ourselves. Around four-thirty, we go on another run, so we'll be back at five-fifteen. Then we all make dinner together and are done eating by six-thirty. After that, it's family time. We like to think of each other as a family here because we're all to help one another. Sometimes we'll watch a movie, or Dungeons and Dragons is a big hit in this house. At nine-thirty, we send all the kids to get pajamas on, brush teeth, and get ready for bed. Lights are out at ten, but we're okay with them staying up to talk until twelve. As long as they eat a good night's sleep, we're okay with it. Free days as every Saturday, but every other day follows this curriculum. Well, except holidays. Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, Halloween, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, and Labor Day are all different. Do you have any questions?"

"No..." Mike mumbled.

"Okay," Joyce smiled, standing up. "I'm going to get the kids from 'Chillax Time'. It was very nice meeting you Mrs. Wheeler."

Mrs. Byers left the room, opening a door that must've led to a bedroom, because Mike could make out some iron frames and a handmade quilt. His mother stood up, dusting off the back of her plaid pencil skirt. She smiled at Mike, but he could tell that she was unsure.

"I'll be okay," he shrugged. "Just tell Holls I love her, okay?"

"Okay," she sniffed, wiping her eyes. She awkwardly kissed the top of his head and briskly walked away.

Mike sat back down, clasping his hands together. Was it bad that he was kind of nervous for something he had been trying to avoid for days? It was like he needed these people to like him or this one year in rehab would be totally pointless. The door that Joyce Byers had gone through reopened, and along with her came several different individuals.

The first one who came through looked exactly like Mrs. Byers, so Mike presumed him to be her son, Will. He was pale and thin with thick brown hair that covered his green eyes. In his color-splattered

hands was a tattered sketchbook with loose leaf paper hanging out of it. The next was a slightly taller boy with curly hair and a shy smile. He was wearing a baseball cap that was red, blue, and white, just like the American flag. He was holding an animal encyclopedia just like Mrs. Byers had mentioned. Behind him was a girl with long, straight, red hair.

She gave him a shy smile, her bright blue eyes shrinking so that her freckled cheeks rose. She's very thin, her sweater trying to desperately cling to her skin. She was holding hands with the tall African American boy beside her. He looked very athletic, muscles embroidering his arms. His brown eyes are wandering the room, and dark circles around her eyes. And then he saw her.

The girl was walking out of the room shyly, her figure wrapped in a overly large Hawkins Police Department sweatshirt. Her short, curly brown hair fell over her beautiful brown eyes, a light layer of freckles dusting her face. She caught his eye and smiled, making him feel like he was going to melt in the middle of the room. She was so unbelievably beautiful.

3. Chapter 2

He couldn't stop looking at her. They were seated across one another during "team bonding at two." She was so beautiful, but he felt somewhat self conscious. All of the other teens were sitting there with him, probably starting at Mike like he was some super creepy pervert. He sure felt like one. He couldn't stop noticing things about her.

She bit her lip when she wanted to say something. Mrs. Byers kept going in and on about new situations. She told everyone about Mike's situation, and they all seemed like they could care less. But she kept wanting to say something. Every time, she opened her mouth, then clamped it shut and bit her lip.

And then there was the little piece of hair. It kept falling in her eyes, no matter how many times she pushed it away. It was like gravity wanted to keep it in the same spot, magnetically pulling it towards itself whenever she moved it away. It was like the piece of hair knew it was driving him crazy. Like the piece of hair knew it was making Mike's palms sweat.

"Mike?"

He looked up to find all the eyes on the room on him, including the pretty girls.

"What?" he asked, coughing and sitting up, crossing his arms over his chest in a casual manner.

"It's your turn to share," Joyce smiled at him, crazy seeming to radiate from her eyes.

"Fine," he sighed. "Um, I'm--"

"Stand up dear."

With a groan, he rose, towering over the group of mentally ill. "I'm Mike. I'm from Chicago. I guess I'm here because I was at this crazy party with Troy and--"

"Who's Troy?"

"What?"

"Who's Troy, honey? Here, we explain our hurtful friends so we can grow."

Another groan. "Troy Harrington. He is--was--my best friend. He was kind of a shitty friend. We always did what he wanted, which was usually parties, alcohol, and girls. Well he did the girls and alcohol, but I kinda always seemed to find myself where I didn't want to be.

So we were at this crazy party a few weekends ago, and the police showed up and there I was with an almost empty bottle of pills. I was admitted to the hospital and then when my mom showed up, she went crazy. I can remember the lecture, but it's not important. And now I'm here because she thinks I'm addicted."

"What do you do for fun, Mike?" Joyce asked.

"I don't know," he shrugged, scratching his head. "All of high school, I was with Troy. I never really did anything for myself. I suck at sports, but I was on the basketball team with him because that's what he wanted to do."

"So you don't do anything for yourself?"

"Not really..."

"Do you do anything at home that Troy wouldn't approve of?"

"I watch Star Wars. Troy thinks it's nerdy, but it's one of my favorite things. I don't know, but I guess it's something that Holly and I—"

"Who's Holly?" someone interrupted. Mike looked up. It was the beautiful girl.

"My sister," he croaked, clearing his throat. "She's eight. She loves ballet and drawing and making cookies. She's your typical eight year old. She didn't deserve all the shit that's happened..."

"What's happened Mike?" This time it was Joyce's voice. The girl had silenced.

"My dad's an asshat. He's such a douche. He's this lazy fart who's obsessed with me becoming a jock asshole who dates cheerleaders and cheats on the cheerleader with another cheerleader because that's who he is."

"Why would you think he's like a teenage jock?"

"Because he cheated on my mom. My sister is a living example of that."

"So how did Holly find out?"

"He sat all of us down and told us. Holly stormed into her room and wouldn't come out until he made her brownies. I wish I could forgive him like she did. I haven't talked to him in almost a year."

"Do you think your dad had something to do with your addiction?"

"First, it's not an addiction. Second, I don't know. I don't give a shit. I just want to make sure Holls is okay."

"Who helps you be better?"

"Holly. She's my motivation. She's just this, oh god, she's just this incredible kid. She's so mature and sweet and understands everything. She's the only one who's forgiven me."

“Okay. Thank you for sharing. Who’s next?”

Will raised his hand, standing up when Joyce nodded. “Hey. I’m Will. Um, I suffer from schizophrenia. So if you don’t know what that, it’s a mental disorder that makes it hard for me to understand reality. So I hear voices and I can’t think straight, and I have false beliefs and that kind of shit. But that makes it easy for me to make art ‘cause I’m an artist. So art is, uh, I guess my thing. I like painting and drawing and coloring. Someone who helps me is my brother, Jonathan, and Ellie,” he said, smiling at the pretty girl. She smiled back. Ellie, Mike thought, that fits her.

“Thank you Will,” Joyce said, squeezing his hand when he sat down. “Let’s go around the circle, starting at Lucas and ending at El.”

The tall, African American stood up, taking his hand from the redhead. “I’m Lucas.” His voice was deep and relaxing. “I have insomnia, so it’s really hard for me to fall asleep and stay asleep. I kinda don’t sleep which isn’t physically or mentally healthy, obviously. It distracts me from my music life, playing the guitar and that kinda stuff. Loving Max, loving my friends, you know? But Will helps. He’s got this crazy imagination, and he tells me stories to get me to sleep. Thanks.”

The redhead popped her bubble gum, standing up and pulling the plaid shirt tied around her waist up from its slipping position. “I’m Max, short for Maxine, but don’t call me Maxine. I have anorexia, as well as PTSD from my brother Billy’s abuse. He’s a shit. He’s literally a psychopathic crackhead. He’s kinda like Troy, Mike, but imagine him like one thousand times worse and both physically and verbally abusive. So besides that, I don’t really eat, like I already said. I wasn’t eating for two months when I passed out at school, which led to me being transferred from home in California to home here in Hawkins. Someone who makes it better is Lucas, my boyfriend, who forces me to eat everyday.”

As she sat down, the boy with the curly who had been tapping like crazy, making Mike ready to jump off a roof. “Hey guys. I’m Dustin. I have anger management issues. I’ve always been angry, kind of like the Hulk. Stan Lee is kinda like one of my heros because he created a character that reflected me and that kinda feels awesome because a lot of people don’t really get it. I love animals. I have a turtle that my brother is taking care of. His name is Yurtle. I have two cats, Mews and Tews. I guess they’re kinda my moms cats, but I love them too. My brother had a dog named Yoda, and I love him ‘cause I also love

Star Wars. I have a Star Wars animal encyclopedia that my brother gave me when I came here. Max helps a lot because she calms me down every time I get upset. So does my older brother, Steve. He's the best. He's training to be a police officer under Hopper and he's the greatest. He brings movies and games and he's so great. Thanks." And finally, the beautiful Ellie. She stood up, rubbing her arm. She bit her lip and looked up at Mike. "I'm Eleven. The guys gave that nickname because I was moved eleven times around Chicago after I was abducted by Brenner. He was this horrible man who took me from my mom, Terry. But she didn't want me after I came home, so Hopper and Joyce kinda took me in. I struggle from self-abuse, so there's cuts lining my wrists." She pulled up her sleeves, revealing the rows of cuts, long and short, lining her wrists and forearms. Some were healed over, even fading from the scarring, but some were still red. "It's kinda hard to stop, but every time I find a blade and bring it close to my skin, Dustin takes it away, and I'm very grateful for that. And I like to write. I have journals full of writing. They're mostly fictional stories, but they all have truth to them."

She sat down and Mike felt blown away. As Joyce rounded everyone up for their next activity, Mike felt unsteady. He had been so worried, but now, he was intrigued. All of these people had different issues, but they all had one thing in common. They all helped one another fix themselves without even beginning to worry about themselves.

4. Chapter 3

Mike felt strange. Everyone here had been truthful. Except him. He had lied about who he was and why he was here. He was addicted, but not to the drugs. To the idea of suicide. And as much as he wanted to shove that night aside, he needed to let go of it. If he ended it all, right here, right now, everything would be over. Holly could have a normal life and Troy would forget about him. His mom wouldn't have to carry the burden of believing that she had an addicted teenager, and his asshole of a father wouldn't have to carry the burden of having a kid at all. Not that he noticed Mike.

So he snuck out of the window. All of the others were asleep; Will was still sitting next to Lucas, who had to be told a two-hour long story to get him to sleep. Max was curled up on the taller boys bare chest, his arms wrapped tightly around her. Dustin was falling off his cot, his snores loud enough to wake the dead. And Eleven, god she was gorgeous. She was sleeping peacefully in her bed, curled up in a layer of blankets, and the same strand was in her eyes. He smiled softly, but ducked out behind the curtains.

Even after Mike climbed the roof, he knew that the fall wouldn't do anything but break his wrist, so he climbed into the treehouse, of Castle Byers as the logo branded. Taking a deep breath, he brought his lanky figure towards the window, which lead to many branches that towered above the forest floor. A pounding started in his chest. He had never been really good with heights...

"Are you going to jump?" a voice came from behind him.

Mike stumbled forward, almost falling towards his death, but he barely caught himself. He whipped his head around. It was Eleven. She was standing here in the dark, her skimpy nightgown wrapping around her hourglass figure.

"You wouldn't be the first one to jump," she said, looking grimly towards the ground Mike's body could be splattered on right now. "One of the girls who was here a few years ago jumped, just when she started to get better. It took forever for the ground to heal. She wasn't exactly a size 0." She crossed her arms over her chest. She looked cold.

Mike scoffed, a little sound similar to laughter escaping through his teeth after. "I would say that's rude, but I'm not one to judge. I'm not exactly innocent."

"No one is," she whispered.

He looked back out the window. If he went now...

"It's not worth it, you know."

"What?" He stayed in the windowsill, but turned to face her.

"Almost half of everyone who jumps realizes about halfway down that so many things they were upset about could've been resolved."

"And how would you know this?"

"Because my aunt jumped. Fractured her ribs, femur, cranium. Her lungs were collapsed and she had a ruptured artery. I wish her when she jumped. The paramedics were too late."

"I'm sorry."

"Don't be," Eleven said, shaking her head. "She didn't want to live this life anymore."

"But I thought she..."

"She did. But that doesn't mean there were some things couldn't be resolved. I didn't come straight to Hopper and Joyce. I lived with Becky after my mom neglected me. She cared for me, but she always wanted me to be with my mom. So Becky went to see her, and my mom told her about why she didn't want me, and she got upset. She told my mom she never wanted to see her ever again. And my mom said fine."

"What did she say?"

"That I was mental." There was a sudden force in her eyes, and it scared Mike.

"Aren't we all?" he stuttered.

"I guess so."

Mike faced the trees once more. Just one little step and everything would be over. He could go, leave this shitty world behind.

"Why would you jump? What makes your life so meaningless?"

"You wouldn't understand..."

"Try me Beyoncé."

Memories of that night flooded his mind.

"Yo Wheeler, come try this man!"

Troy was practically naked, his unicorn boxers showing off what little he had. Two skinny blondes in bikinis were hooked on his arms, both pressing their basically flat chests against him. Their nonexistent butts were in revealing bottoms. Mike rolled his eyes, but went over to his friend. You could smell the alcohol radiating from Troy, but he went over anyways. The shorter boy handed Mike a colorful drink.

"What's in it?" he asked, smelling the oddly colored beverage.

"Pure fuel," Troy screamed, the girls laughing idiotically and running their hands over his chest.

"I'm okay, thanks."

"Oh, come on Wheeler. If you're going to have one of these ladies play tigress with you tonight—"

"Troy, no."

"Oh come on Mikey. Live a little! It's better than babysitting Holly!"

"Not at all, no."

"Playing Barbies is definitely not as good as—"

"Please don't finish that sentence."

"Loosen up Mikey," Troy said, a threatening tone suddenly adopting his voice. "Loosen up or you'll be sorry."

"You can't make me do anything I don't want to Troy."

"I can and I will. Get your scrawny ass in the bedroom now so you can get laid. I'm not going to ask again Wheeler. Unless you want something to happen to Holly..."

Mike froze. He was going to go after Holly. Mike couldn't let that happen. He turned stiffly and went. He could feel Troy's evil grin spreading across his chubby face.

He locked the door and screamed, kicking over the nightstand. How could he be so dumb? He wasn't protecting Holly; Troy would go after her anyways! Hatred for himself and for his friend spread over him like jam overly freshly toasted bread. Mike went into the bathroom and slammed the door, the whole room trembling. I wish I were never born, echoed in his head. I wish I was dead.

The medicine cabinets. He ripped them open, exposing thousands of orange bottles filled with multi-colored pills. He screwed off their white lids, pouring hundreds of pills into his hands. He went into the bedroom and turned on the light, unlocking the door. He didn't even know why. Actually, he did. Mike wanted Troy to walk through that door and find him dead, knowing that he was the reason why.

A glass of water was on the dresser. Mike grabbed it, finding out that it was, unfortunately, vodka. No matter. He placed around fifteen exotic pills onto his tongue, and swallowed them with the painful drink. And then came the sirens.

Eleven looked at him as Mike icily told his story, tears getting caught up in his throat. Silence fell over them. Mike heard her snuffle, and saw her wipe her eyes.

“You attempted suicide to save your sister.”

“No,” Mike choked. “I attempted suicide to save myself. I’m not strong enough to have done it for Holly.”

“You did it for her.”

“You’re not hearing me...”

“I am. And I’m telling you you’re wrong. You did it for her. You don’t have to think your selfish Mike...”

“Yes I am! I tried to take my life away so it wouldn’t be so hard for me!”

“Believe what you want, but you’re wrong.”

Silence fell once more. Mike sat on the windowsill, legs dangling out the window. It was a full moon, illuminating the dark sky filled with twinkling stars.

“Please don’t jump.”

“I’m not,” Mike whispered.

Notes for the Chapter:

Sorry for not updating in so long!! :/ I’ve been super busy with school ending and exams and other crap

5. Chapter 4

Mike had been at “Camp Reform with the Mentally Insane Mrs. Byers” for eight days, ten hours, sixteen minutes, and fifty-one, fifty-two, fifty-three seconds. And in this time, Eleven hadn’t said another word to him. It both made him happy, and mad. Sure, she hadn’t said anything to anyone about him being suicidal, but she hadn’t said anything to him. He thought that maybe she would open up to him, but no such luck. It was disappointing.

They were in town today, their freedom exciting them. It was Sunday Funday, but Mike felt like the only one who wasn’t having fun. The five teenagers who were permanent residents of Hawkins, Indiana were roaming around, laughing and shoving at one another, giggling about inside jokes that had existed before Mike. He felt like the lonely kid at lunch who had to sit near the trash cans, waiting to get recognized. Again. As the group wandered towards the arcade, he cut off from them, turning back around. Mrs. Byers didn’t say anything about being together...

The forest was alive; tiny deer speckled in white spots as clean as snow emerged from behind trees, looking curiously at the world they had just been brought into. Butterflies floated like they were in a room where gravity was not relevant, floating higher and higher towards the blinding sun which shone through the billion of bright green leaves, stretching from their branches to get enough sunlight to last them the day. The dirt smelled like fresh rain, it’s body still damp from the past nights shower.

Blooming flowers poked from the soil as if they were zombies breaching for air, gasping as if they hadn’t seen the sky in decades. Petals of many colors, purples, oranges, golds, and teals, reflected the dew in the sunlight. It was beautiful. Mike inhaled the fresh air as if he had been suffocating for weeks, and this was his first real breathe. And it was. This was the first time he really breathed and excepted the bullshit world he had been put into.

As he wandered the path, he found himself in a quarry, and all the bad feelings started to come back to him, retreating from happiness like it was going to burn them.

“Live a little!”

Unicorn boxers.

“Loosen up Mikey!”

Two blondes clinging onto him.

"You'll be sorry!"

The drinks spill.

"You want something to happen to Holly?"

Pills. So many pills...

He nears the edge without even realizing. His toes are dangling over the edge, his shoes barely still on the rock. A hand jerks him back, hard. He falls backwards. The gravel is a rude awakening, skinning his back and hands as he slides on the choppy rocks.

"What the hell?"

"I should be asking you that, Mike!"

It's Eleven. She's sitting there, her knees digging into the uneven pebbles, head in her hands. Tears are streaming down her cheeks, and she's choking on a sob.

"What do you think you're doing?"

"I—hey, what's wrong?"

"Nothing," she says harshly, wiping her eyes, "I'm obviously fine."

"No you're not..." he says gently, helping her to her feet after dusting himself off. She takes his outstretched hand.

She hugs him. She hugs him and it's like the angels are singing from the heavens. She's so warm and comforting as she wraps her small arms around his midriff, her head barely making it to his chest, but she still manages to bury her head in his shirt. Eleven smells of freshly toasted waffles and whipped cream. Mike hugs her back, pulling her tightly into him. He has never felt so content.

And then she pulls away abruptly, her face a shade of red that resembles a strawberry in the summertime.

"Why were you going to jump?" she said angrily.

"Why were you going to cry?" Mike shot back.

"The one who was half an inch from death gets to answer first," she said sassily, crossing her arms over her chest.

"I don't know," he mumbled.

"Louder, please."

"I don't know, El, okay!"

"You called me El."

"Yeah, I did. Get over it!"

"Why'd you call me that?"

"Because I wanted to! You don't have to be such a bitch about it..."

"Did you just call me a bitch?"

"Yeah, I did!"

She looked at him, an angry red replacing the sweet blush that had highlighted her face moments ago. She turned on her heels and left.

"I was gonna jump because it would be easier than realizing that I do have a problem. I'm the problem!" he called out, surprising himself.

She stopped and backtracked, slowly approaching him.

"I was going to jump because it's the quickest way out, and I need out. I know you probably don't understand, but ending my life would be so much easier than coming to terms with the fact that I'm fucked up. I have so many issues that I can't solve, and it's unbearable. It's un-fucking-bearable."

She didn't say anything; she just looked at him, but then quietly said after a moment, "I was crying because I couldn't save my aunt. I was right there when she jumped at I didn't save her. I cried because I saved you, but I didn't save her."

Now it was Mike's turn for silence, but then he gave her a shy smile.

"I'll bet you wished you hadn't saved me, huh?"

"No, actually," she whispered. "It's the best thing I've ever done."

She turned and sprinted away, leaving Mike in a state of confusion and lust.

Notes for the Chapter:

Hey guys!! I'm so sorry for being so inactive :(now that it's summer and school's out, I'll have more time to write so expect some more chapters added to holographic and maybe a new story :)

6. Chapter 5

The last thing Mike expected was to be cornered by Will. Like, literally the last thing. The fragile boy seemed as if he wouldn't pose a threat, but apparently he did. Unfortunately for Mike, he figured this out as the skinny boy had him pinned against a tree. One minute Mike had been jogging along the winding trails that ran through the woods, and the next he was pinned up against a large fir tree, the trunk digging into his neck.

"What the hell?" he gasped, the shorter boy's hands around his next.

"Do you like Eleven?" Will growled.

"What?"

"Do you like her?"

"Yes..." Mike mumbled, his oxygen beginning to run low.

"Louder!"

"Get your hands off my neck and maybe you'll get a louder answer," he gasped. Will immediately let go of Mike's next, red marks around the taller boy's neck. "Yes, I do. Why?"

"No reason..."

"Okay. Well then, I'm going to catch up with the group."

Mike began to jog, following the footprints embedded into the muddy trails. He had gotten about twenty yards from Will when he felt a hand jerk him back. This time, he wasn't pinned against a tree. He just fell flat into the mud, his body shaking into his curls.

He looked up to see Will's eyes on him, both curious and terrified.

"What?"

"You can't go that way," he whispered, "You'll upset him."

"Who?" Mike got to his knees and looked around. There was no one else in the vicinity; just vast miles of woodland. They were alone. Who could Will be talking about?

"The demogorgon..."

"The what?" Mike said loudly.

"Shhhh!" Will hushed, grabbing Mike's arm and dragging with him as he sprinted through the trees, tripping over a root. Both boys went flying, but Will scrambled up and picked Mike up, pulling the confused teen.

"Will! Stop! Slow down!" Mike screamed.

"He's going to catch up to us!" Will said, panicked. "He's going to take us to the Upside Down. We'll be goners! We'll be like Barb!"

Hurry Mike!"

As they ran, Mike tried to figure out what Will was talking about. Demogorgon? Upside Down? Barb? Who were these people, these things, and why Will so scared? And then Mike remembered. Schizophrenia. Will couldn't understand reality. This wasn't this reality, it was another one, one of Will's imagination.

"Will, they're not real! Barbs not real! The demogorgon isn't real!" Mike called, planting his feet, slowing the two down. Will was crying, tears streaming down his face. He's terrified, Mike realized.

"He's coming for me," he choked, shaky breaths escaping his lips. "He's going to get me. He got Barb, and he's going to get me. I don't want to go Mike."

"He's not going to get you Will..."

"He's going to get me and I don't wanna go." Will was full-out sobbing, hiccups and all. He fell to his knees, burying his head in his lap. "I don't wanna go!"

Mike crouched down next to Will, taking his hand and giving it a squeeze. "You're not going anywhere Will. I promise."

Will looked up, still scared, but no longer shaking. He looked at Mike's hand in his and looked back at Mike. "But I saw him. He was lurking in the woods."

"It's just your mind playing tricks..."

"I don't know..."

"Will," Mike said, putting a hand on the other boy's cheek to turn his head towards him, "I promise it's not real?"

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Will smiled, and began to very slowly, one centimeter at a time, lean towards Mike when Eleven and the group came towards them, all panicked and out of breath.

"Will!" Mrs. Byers yelled.

Will jumped up and hugged his mom, sobbing once more. "I saw him again."

"Oh Willy," she gasped, kissing his head. "Are you okay baby?"

"Yeah," he hiccuped. "Mike helped me."

Everyone turned to look at Mike, who was still on the ground, and ogled at him. Nervously and awkwardly, Mike waved. He stood, brushing off his pants. Mrs. Byers, frazzle and all, walked up to him and tightly hugged him. In a state of shock, he gasped, but hugged her back.

Smiling, she pulled away. "Thank you." She turned back to Will and led him home.

"Thanks man," Dustin said, clapping him on the back.

"Guess you aren't who I thought," Max said, offering him a shy smile, and then leading Lucas away.

Eleven shyly walked up to him, twirling her fingers. Briefly, she stood on her toes to kiss his cheek before retreating after her friends.

7. Chapter 6

Mike still felt unsettled from El's kiss. Sure, it wasn't technically a "kiss", but it was pretty damn close. In fact, the whole thing left him unsettled. Everyone was treating him like royalty; Max was no longer annoyed that he was tagging along, Lucas let him play his guitar a few times during rest period, and Dustin showed him the creek and how to catch reptiles and amphibians. Oh yeah, and Hopper was much less suspicious and gave Mike a little slack on his leash.

And another thing: Will. Mike wasn't dumb; he knew Will had tried to kiss him, but the one thing he wasn't sure of is that if Will had actually kissed him, would he have kissed him back? He felt confused; El was beautiful, but so was Will? Right?

Will has a chiseled jaw and gorgeous eyes, so curious and full of life. But El was sexy and mysterious, and she made him feel special. And Mike was pretty sure she liked him, too. But Will liked him, too. Mike felt like throwing himself in the trash; when did liking someone get so complicated. Even his dreams haunted him. Especially the one that was running through his head at the moment.

He and El were in a room in a cottage in the middle of the woods. There was a fire crackling behind them. They were on the bearskin rug. Mike's lips were on her neck as she stretched beneath him.

"Mike," she moaned, "don't stop."

He grinned against her neck, his heart in his bare chest beating against her shirt. He lifted his lips to her jawline, tracing her bone through her beautiful with his mouth and he carefully took her sweater from her body, throwing it towards the couch. He moved his lips to her shoulders, and then to her hips, hooking his fingers in the belt loops of her jeans.

He pulled away and opened his eyes to find Will in El's place, his chiseled abs taunting Mike.

"Come on Mike," Will teased, grabbing at Mike's hips. "I want to feel your lips."

Mike, greedy, slammed his mouth down on Will's, a warmth spreading throughout his body. Will flipped over Mike, Mike's back now pressed against the carpet. Will brought his lips to Mike's neck, nibbling at his skin. Mike moaned, and Will grinned as he grabbed at Mike's jeans and began to—

"Hey! Wheeler!"

Mike felt a aluminum can hit him on the head. Groaning, he sat up to find El at the window, her little head peeking over the windowsill.

"What the hell are you doing," he moaned, looking at the alarm clock. "Its, like, five in the morning."

"Exactly! I came to show you something."

"Right now?"

"No dipshit, at noon. Yes right now!"

"Fine, I'm coming. Let me just get my--"

"Mike!" she abruptly interrupted. "If you take any longer we're going to get caught, so let's just go already!"

"Impatient much?" he muttered as he followed her out of the window, climbing onto the windowsill beside her.

"Follow me," she smiled, grabbing at the pipe on the roof and hoisting herself up.

"Why are we going on the roof exactly?"

"You ask too many questions. Let's just go!"

Shaking his head, Mike pulled himself up behind her, the pipe trembling as he secured himself on the slanted surface.

"Let's go Wheeler! Move your slow ass!"

Scoffing, Mike scampered towards her, making his way to the other side of the roof where El sat, legs dangling over the edge shackles. Slowly sinking himself down next to her, he watched as she lit a cigarette and then take a drag.

"I didn't know you smoked," Mike said.

"Most people don't. My aunt smoked. This was her pack. It's a familiar scent, and I guess I like familiarity."

"Oh."

She took another long drag, inhaling the dangerous chemicals that were slowly burning up her lungs.

"The world is holographic Wheeler," she said, bringing the cigarette away from her lips, blowing the smoke out from in-between her teeth.

"What?"

"The world is holographic."

"Yeah, I got that, but what the hell is that supposed to mean?"

"You've ever seen a hologram?" He shook his, taking the cigarette away from her delicate fingers. "A hologram is a three-dimensional image that's formed by light beams from a laser," she sighed as he took a long drag. "It's a photograph of an interference pattern that produces a 3D image when lit."

“So how does that make the world holographic?”

“Certain things seem flat or two-dimensional, like a photograph, until illuminated by a light source that reveals their true form. People are like that,” she shrugged, staring at the overcast sky. “They’re flat and you can’t see the whole picture until you shine some light on them. That’s when they reveal their true form.”

He considered this, but eventually nodded. “You know, for an insane person, you’re pretty insightful.”

“And for a suicidal person, you’re pretty brave.”

“What do you mean?”

“If I were you, I would’ve already jumped,” she said, motioning to the edge of the roof where their feet dangled, delicately hitting one another every so often. “It’s so much easier than dealing with shit.” She shook her head, stealing her cigarette back. But instead of taking in more, she threw it off the roof, watching as it fell three stories.

“What kind of shit?” Mike asked, rubbing his hands together to fight back the cold morning air.

“People look at us different. The only difference between on of us and a normal person is we’ve been strong for too long and we cracked.”

“People are afraid of losing. They look down upon us like we’ve lost when in reality we’ve won. We’ve looked death in the face and won. They don’t look down upon us; they’re afraid of us.”

El looked at Mike, but he only looked further into the horizon.

“And I’m the insightful one,” she whispered.

Gently, she grabbed his chin, turning his head towards her. Nervously, she brought his lips inches from her, eyes flickering back and forth between his lips and eyes. Almost timidly, she pressed her mouth to his. Quickly pulling back, El removed her hand from his cheek and stood up, briskly walking the other way. Mike jumped up after her, chasing her down. He grabbed her by the waist, an arm wrapping behind her back to pull her into him. Cradling her cheek, he pushed their lips back together, deepening what they had previously started. El found her hands in his hair, her forearms wrapping gently around his neck.

8. Chapter 7

He couldn't stop looking at her. Every chance Mike got, he stared at El, longing to feel her soft, lush lips pressed against his, her tongue flirting with his. God, he wanted everything she had to offer. She was perfect, and he knew it, but there was still one problem. Will.

Just because El made him feel alive, but that didn't mean that Will didn't make him feel the same way. El showed him the world, but Will showed him the beauty in everything. They were both so alike, so thrilling, and Mike wanted both of them. But he couldn't have both of them, and eenie-meenie-minie-moe wouldn't solve anything this time; he would have to lose one of them to have the other.

But Mike wasn't ready to choose just yet, or to share with either of them that he felt something for both of them. It was too early to choose. Or maybe it wasn't. El showed him that there were reasons beyond happiness for living; there was love, and kindness, and generosity that made him want to expand his horizon of life, not to end it in the dark.

The world was holographic, and he needed to start seeing everything in 3D.

They were on the trails, hiking around when Mike cut off from the group, disappearing beyond the trees to a small opening. He sat and waited, braiding together strands of grass until he saw Will sit beside him in the corner of his eye, picking the petals from a flower.

"I like El," he said softly. "I only think of you as a friend. I'm sorry."

Will cringed, his whole body becoming shriveled. But he swallowed down the lump in his throat, sitting up and wiping his already damp eyes. "I figured," he said, his voice cracking. "She's great."

"You're great too, Will, but I just don't..."

"No, I get it," he whispered. "I'm not her. It's okay Mike. I don't care."

Yes you do, Mike thought to himself, I can hear it in your voice.

"I'm really sorry..."

"Like I said," Will said harshly, standing up and throwing down the flower, "I don't care. It's not like your my boyfriend."

But I could've been, Mike thought again. Maybe I still could be...

"Will, wait!"

He swiveled around, his face somewhat red. He looked defeated. That was until Mike grabbed him by his waist, pulling him into his chest

as he kissed Will gently, his lips finding his full ones easily. Will's arms wrapped around Mike's neck, the shorter boy standing on his toes so he could kiss him more passionately, his whole body leaning into Mike's.

But Mike pushed him away, staring deeply into Will's eyes. "El cannot know, okay? I haven't told her that I'm..."

"Bi? She won't care..."

"She'll care because it's you that makes me not want to be with her. And she's like your sister."

"Oh." Will bit his lip, and pulled away from Mike's arms. "I forgot about that..." His face then lit up. "What if we just didn't tell her?"

"No," Mike said, shaking his head, "I'm not dishonest."

"But-"

"No way," Mike insisted.

"Whatever," Will said sighing, turning away and running back to the trails, leaving Mike alone in the dust.

Notes for the Chapter:

sorry for such a short, crap chapter. next update will be MUCH better i promise.